

The Foothills View

FEBRUARY, 1983

BOILING SPRINGS NC

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“Just A Little Country Church

We left a friend among the pine woods and killdeer this week.

His name was Jim, the third Gardner-Webb professor to die following an automobile wreck last Thursday night. Two other professors had died at the scene; Jim lived two days in intensive care. Saturday morning I tried to characterize him as we walked from the funeral of one of the two:

“Jim likes to write funny stories about the country up near Rutherfordton,” I told a friend from Charlotte. “Every now and then I’d print one in the paper.”

“We’ll go see him at the hospital and swap stories with him when he’s feeling better,” she said.

Jim died that afternoon, and driving to his funeral the following Tuesday I thought how little I really knew about the man I had regarded as just a little country writer from a little country church. Jim had talked to me in the evenings after his classes about syndicating a column of country humor to newspapers and as I drove I remembered I had assured him there was little money, and no fame, in such work.

I did not know how famous my friend was until I crossed the Rutherford County line.

At the intersections of farm-to-market roads, a fire truck marked the way to the small country church where Jim was to be buried - it’s presence no small sacrifice in a rural community protected only by a volunteer fire department.

A count deputy stood directing traffic at one intersection. “You going to Jim’s funeral?” he asked. I leaned out of the car to yell yes and received an intimation of my own mortality; I was shocked by how boyish was the face under the brim of the Smokey hat. “You better hurry up,” he said. “The church was about full near an hour ago.” He waved me through, then shouted after me:

“He was a good man. I knew him.”

The little Baptist church on the hill was in fact more than filled when I got there. Jim’s friends and neighbors filled the sanctuary and stood shoulder-to-shoulder in the doorway under the blue stained glass “Jesus Saves” at the front door. To my left stood a man whose years of work under the sun had given his face a texture and color resembling red brick; at my right, in a small room, a laughing toddler was minded by one of the women. The organist finished “Rock of Ages” and a white-haired man walked to the front of the church.

“My name is Aulton Cole,” he told the congregation. “I’ve known James all my life.”

As Cole, a deacon, began to tell the story of Jim’s life, each of us in the congregation recalled our own memory. I thought of how Jim would walk forward to shake my hand and tell me a story of a cousin in Rutherford who “held his mouth just right” to be the subject of a joke. Jim limped as a result of childhood polio, and each time I saw that smiling, halting figure coming toward me I was forcibly reminded of the truth of the Roman slave Epictetus that “lameness” is an impediment to the body but not the mind.

“I suppose if he could speak to us this morning he would say it was better,” Aulton Cole said. “Never again will he have to limp as he walks through life. Never again will he have to suffer the pain of arthritis.” I realized with a jolt I never knew Jim was arthritic because he never complained of it. “Today he is in the presence of God,” Aulton Cole said.

“I miss him. He was my friend.”

We had to step outside to make room for the coffin. Outside the air was full of hot, piney smell and as we waited for the pallbearers to bring the coffin forward, I looked out from the church steps over a landscape that must have given Jim pleasure many times. To the west miles away the mountains were as blue as the “Jesus Saves” over the church door, the immediate landscape would gladden any country heart: a cow pond, then rolling pasture dotted with white farm houses to the distant mountains.

From inside was heard the final praying over the body. Outside were the sounds of life as usual in Rutherford County: a buzz saw worked in a pine grove to our left, while down the hill in front of the church two brown-tailed birds flew away with their distinctive cry, **killdeer, killdeer.**

The pallbearers brought the coffin out the door, and we followed it down a narrow lane to the church cemetery. There, after a chorus of “Amazing Grace,” among the pine trees and the killdeer, we left our friend.

That was Tuesday. Today my friend Jim is among that other congregation of the little country church that waits, their tombstones expectantly facing east. The cemetery is a friendly place for one who loved and wrote about the country: members of Jim’s family are buried there from 1833, and yesterday there at dusk I heard through the pine trees the cows bawl for supper, the birds grow quieter, and saw one-by-one the lights turn on at the surrounding farm houses.

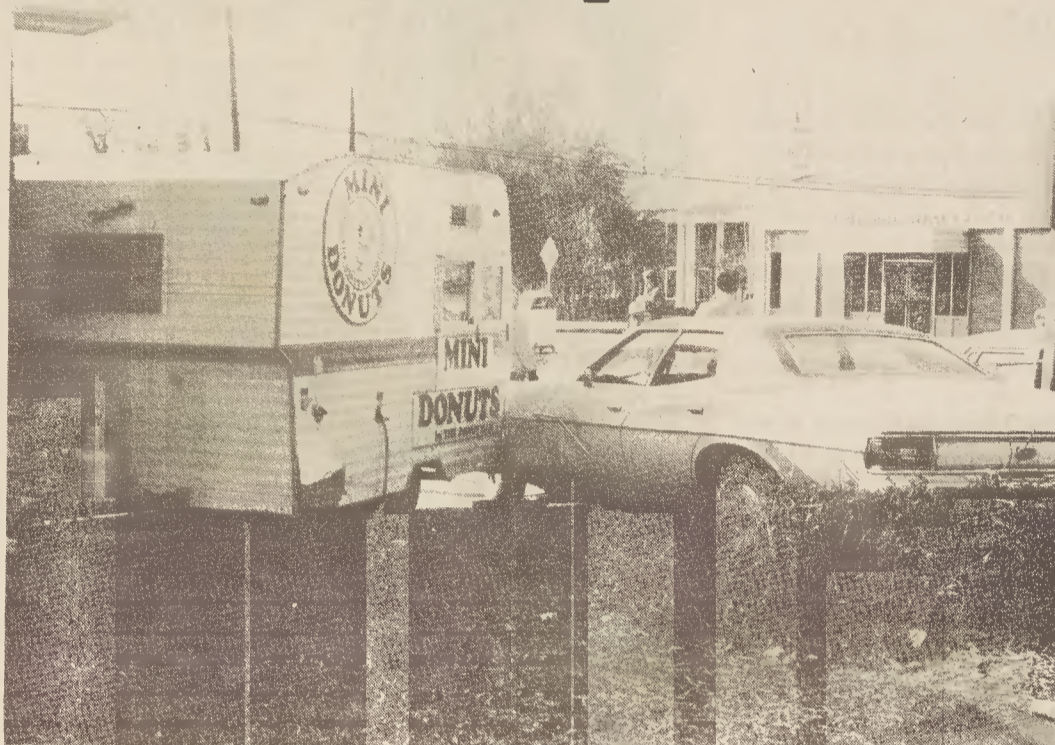
I’m grateful for the light of a little country church to remind us that one day, in the words of the Psalm, the Lord “upholds all who are falling and raises up all who are bowed down.”

Until that day, as Aulton Cole so eloquently said:

“I miss him. He was my friend.”

—Dave Robertson

Car Collides With Do-Nut Shop



Boiling Springs donut vendor Homer Monroe Mullen Jr. was not prepared for the kind of drive-in “customer” that battered his mobile shop last Saturday.

Mullen was dropping donut batter into bubbling grease about 11 a.m., when he glanced out the window of his camper-shop, parked at the Gulf service station at College and Main, saw the rear of a driverless car bearing down on his domain.

“I just happened to look out just an instant before the car hit,” Mullen said. “The car door flew open and a little girl fell out.

I knew that car was going to hit. I got out of the way just as that 375-degree grease hit the floor.”

The child, Brandalyn Spelling, 7, was not seriously injured, but Mullen suffered severe burns when the grease splattered on his feet and legs. Bystanders took him to Crawley Hospital for emergency treatment.

The runaway car, a 1974 Ford sedan, had been parked across Main Street at the post office.

The driver, Debroah F. Moore of Boiling Springs had left the motor running and the child in the car while she went briefly in-

to the post office. Either the child bumped the shifter or it slipped from park into reverse, investigating officers said, and the car lurched backward, across Main Street, and into the donut shop.

No charges were filed in the accident, which did \$450 damage to the car and \$400 to the donut shop. Mullen, who lives in Forest City, is recovering from the burns. As soon as his doctor says he is able, he says, “I’ll get back over there and try to get set up again. I’ve got to get all that grease and batter off the floor.”

Signup For In-Kind Payment

Bill Barmore, Director, Southeast ASCS Area Director, announced at a Press Conference in Charlotte Friday, January 21, 1983, that a large number of eligible farmers are expected to participate in the Payment in Kind Program.

“We have a three-fold objective for Payment in Kind,” Barmore said. “Reduce production, reduce surplus stock holdings, and avoid increased budget outlays that would otherwise be necessary under Price Support Programs.”

The signup began January 24 and will end on March 11, 1983. The signup date for the earlier announced Reduced Acreage Program is now advanced to the same March 11, 1983, deadline.

Marshall W. Grant, Chairman, North Carolina State ASC Committee, said that the program applies to wheat, corn, grain sorghum, cotton and rice.

Farmers have four possible options for making their 1983 farm plans. They may participate only in the regular farm programs; participate in the regular program plus the 10-30 percent Payment in Kind; withdraw the entire base acreage if the whole base is accepted; or not participate at all.

Mr. Grant urges farmers to visit the local ASCS Offices and get full details of the program.

“A Penny’s Worth Of Candy” A Wealth Of Art

Few grown-ups remember this past Christmas, or what they had for dinner last night, half as vividly as Corene Blanton Anthony remembers the gentle joys of a childhood before World War I.

It’s not rare for older folks to recall early times and tell stories, usually with a moral, to the young; many a school child has heard Grandpa say, “When I was your age I had to chop a cord of stovewood before I walked five miles to school in the snow, barefooted.”

But Corene Anthony’s memories of life in the old Sharon Community, south of Shelby, were so full of love and delight and mischief that these little sermons would never be enough to convey them. Well into her middle age, she began to put them on canvas. In bright colors, with technique born of talent but no training, she painted the kids’ lemonade stand, as it probably stood under the trees of S. Lafayette Street, where her family home still stands.

She painted wash day, with the stout washwoman and her round black washpot, and the Sunday processional to church, and bringing in the Christmas tree, and a make-believe baptizing, where the pretend preacher “accidentally” spills the whole bucket on a tiny parishioner who was only expecting to be sprinkled.

It was 1956 when she sent by an office friend who was going to a paint store, for her first box of oil paints. That night she sat down and painted a yellow chrysanthemum from her yard. Pleased with the result, that same night she painted a still-life



of fruit. The only training she’d ever had she says, was when “Annie Patterson used to give us little art lessons. She was my third grade teacher.”

Between that beginning and later intensive study and the abstracts, noted for the richness of their colors, which are now being widely shown around the area, Mrs. Blanton produced the bulk of her primitives, the childhood scenes that first brought her recognition as an artist.

Seventeen of these are in a book, with a short memoir, called “A Penny’s Worth of Candy,” that Mrs. Blanton published last year. Others are available as prints.

The oldest girl of the nine children born to Drury Watson and Ida Pearl Byers Blanton, she had known by the time she was three years old that she wanted to be an artist, she says. “My mother was an artist,” she remembers now, with a little surprise. “She was a real mother, soft-spoken and lovely. We used to hang on her rocking chair and we’d say, ‘Draw us a bird...draw us a lady...draw us a flower.’ She would have been great, if she’d



Mrs. Anthony at left holds her version of history. Above is her painting, “A Penny’s Worth Of Candy.”

had training.”

While it was a good life, of big gardens and picnics and productive cotton fields, it was not easy. Corene went to work in a mill, at 14, to help her parents keep the boys in school till they could finish. Later she worked 40 years in the same Shelby office. When her husband, John Carl Anthony, who had encouraged her to paint, died in 1973, art meant more than ever. Though she had produced at least a thousand paintings by that time, and many were already in the hands of collectors, she began to study first at Canaan Valley, West Virginia, and then wherever a seminar or teacher led her.

A collection of the paintings of Corene Blanton Anthony are on display through Feb. 17 in

the lobby of Brown Auditorium, at Shelby High School. A larger exhibit follows, at Forest City, opening with a reception from 2 to 4 p.m., Feb. 20, at the Rutherford Art’s Council Gallery, 2 E. Main Street. The public is invited.

Some of her childhood scenes, she promises, will be included. They are, she assures, painted exactly from memories of life. Except, “The red clothes on the little girls I did just for color. My mother never would put red on us.” Red was not for ladies, in that other time.

Soon to be 74, Corene still finds the greatest peace and beauty in that time: “It was the cooperation and understanding of my mother and father that made our home so happy...”

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